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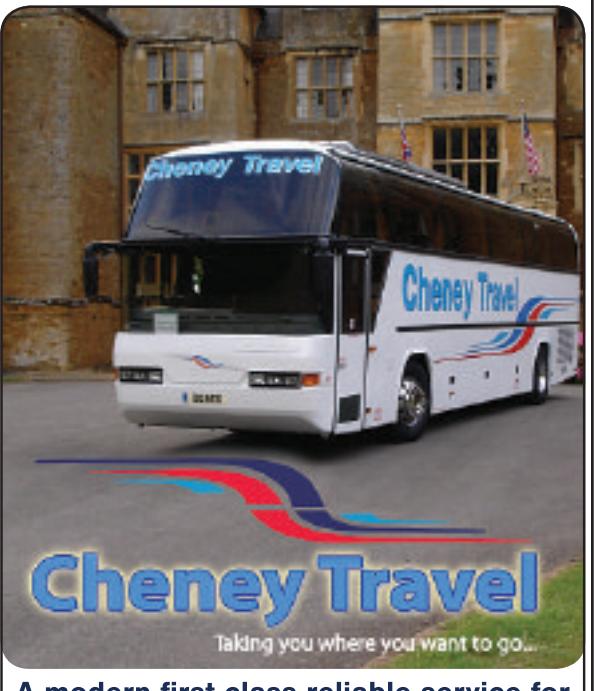
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Teams of walkers take on 50km Tour de Trigs



Ellie Boot and Joe McElligott plot their course in the Tour de Trigs. Go to page 2 for the full story and more pictures

Senior planning officer opposes more housing for Bloxham

VILLAGE 'FULL' SAYS PLANNER

CHERWELL'S most senior planning officer has joined Bloxham residents in opposing 160 homes for the village.

Adrian Colwell said Bloxham had taken enough new homes and plans for 75 and 85 houses should tonight be refused.

It comes after a "Keep Bloxham Rural" campaign against the plans, with fears over traffic, services, flooding and impact on schools.

They are fighting Gladman Developments' plans for 75 homes in Barford Road and Mintondale Developments' bid for 85 in Milton Road.

But developers have said the projects are vital to provide much-needed housing. There are 110 people on the council's waiting list for Bloxham.

Mr Colwell, head of strategic planning and the economy at Cherwell District Council, said Bloxham "has experienced a comparatively high level of development in recent years".

He said 224 homes had been built since 2001 and permission exists for 12 more, 10 above its requirement in council housing plans. He said: "I am concerned that the

By Oliver Evans

development of a significant number of additional houses at this time would result in Bloxham disproportionately contributing."

The council's planning committee will meet at the council's Bodicote offices to decide on both plans.

Planning officers recommend members reject the "harmful" Milton Road plan, but approve the other as it does not show "significant" harm.

Some 140 letters, plus Bloxham Parish Council, oppose the Milton Road plan – to include 30 affordable units.

The parish warned: "This opportunist, speculative development, if approved will destroy the current fragile infrastructure of Bloxham."

A 138-signature petition and 220 letters oppose the Barford Road plan – to include 26 affordable home.

More homes would see the already full Bloxham Primary School turn children away, it warned. School leaders said developers would have to pay to expand schools if permission was given.

Thames Water said current drainage systems could not cope with both, and said improvements would be needed. The village suffered flooding during the recent heavy rain.

Painters Close resident Gill Battle, 64, said: "We have had problems with flooding – it is ludicrous to be building that number of houses."

Maule Close resident Peter Curtis, 65, said: "We have been allocated our quota."

The committee will meet at 2pm. The public can attend.


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 ALL WINDOWS MANUFACTURED IN BANBURY

InBRIEF**A Victorian Christmas**

BANBURY: A Victorian Christmas Market will be held in the town centre tomorrow.

The 9am to 8pm event will feature traders in period dress, free samples and tastings, late-night shopping, street entertainment, a carousel and choir.

The event has been organised by Cherwell District Council and market operator Sketts in a bid to boost trade in the town.

Concern over 'puppy' calls

N OXON: A cold caller has been touring villages, knocking on doors, and asking if the resident is selling puppies, police say.

Police said the man – a silver van driver described as white and in his 50s – was seen in Shutford on Wednesday, November 28.

Anyone with information should call 101.

Mill reopens

BANBURY: The Mill Arts Centre was set to reopen on Tuesday, following its closure due to flooding.

Part of the ground floor was so badly damaged that management had no option but to close the venue on November 22.

Planned classes and events will restart as scheduled.

For details email rosalind.templeman@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Parish seat

ADDERBURY: Nominations are being sought for a seat on Adderbury Parish Council.

An election will be held by the end of December if 10 electors request a poll by December 13.

It comes after Mike Dolamore stepped down for personal reasons.

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Ambulance crew backed over badger 'rescue'

FOLLOWING an investigation, ambulance chiefs have stood by a decision by paramedics to pick up a dying badger and take it to a vet.

South Central Ambulance Service said the crew's decision was "humane" and did not divert them from emergency duties.

Spokesman James Keating-Wilkes said: "An ambulance crew returning from hospital to base encountered what they believed to be a dead badger in the road in Banbury and, believing that this posed a danger to other road users, stopped to move it to the side of the road.

"On approaching the animal the crew noticed that the badger was alive and in considerable distress.

"They contacted a local vet who asked them to bring the badger in to a veterinary practice approximately half-a-mile from the scene, which they did."

It is understood the badger was taken to West Bar Veterinary Hospital where it was put to sleep.

He said: "At no point was patient safety compromised.

"Our internal investigation has now been completed and we are satisfied that the crew was acting in the best humane

interests of the animal."

Ex-GP Dr Peter Skolar, chairman of the Oxfordshire joint health overview and scrutiny committee, backed their actions.

He said: "As long as they didn't put anyone else's life at risk then I think they deserve a medal."

Jobs saved as printer is sold off

By Andrew Smith

WORKERS spoke of their relief after their jobs were saved at an Oxfordshire printing company.

All 518 jobs were secured at Benhamgoodheadprint (BGP) after parent company the Goodhead Group was bought out of administration for an undisclosed sum by rival firm the Polestar Group.

The firm has two local sites, BGP in Bicester and Stones the Printers in Banbury.

The Banbury Cake understand workers were not paid last week, but the money went into their accounts last Friday once the new owners were in place.

The deal was a "pre-pack" administration which means the business was immediately bought by an agreed buyer once administrators had stepped in.

It is understood that while the Goodhead business has transferred to Polestar, the company pension scheme will almost certainly be passed to the Government-backed Pension Protection Fund.

The company – founded in 1973 under the name Goodhead Press – has made losses of £70m over the past five years, triggered by the loss of its contract to print the BT Phone Book in 2006.

At one point the company, which will now be known as Polestar, was making yearly losses of £18m, although last year that loss was reduced to £3.5m.

One worker, who declined to be named, said: "It was a nightmare company to work for.

"I hope the management is going to be better now.

"We have got to give them the benefit of the doubt. At least I can get food on the table and pay the bills now."

In January this year, Goodhead, owned by Sir John Madejski, asked all its staff to take a pay cut of up to 20 per cent in a bid to save £2m.

Barry Hibbert, the chief executive of Polestar, said: "We are delighted to add the firepower and product capability of BGP and Stones to the Polestar portfolio which will strengthen and extend our client service offering substantially.

"BGP and Stones are superbly equipped facilities with dedicated and highly-skilled employees and, whilst some changes will be inevitable, it is our intention to continue with the businesses in their current form."

Mr Hibbert added: "We are confident the integration of these operations into the Polestar Group will be a positive move for customers, employees and suppliers of the business."

Allan Graham, joint administrator and restructuring partner at administrators KPMG, said: "The printing sector has suffered extremely difficult trading conditions over the last few years, but we are pleased that we have been able to rescue the business and over 500 jobs with today's sale to Polestar."

Tour de Trigs proves tricky



Jon Crawley, Harry Monk and Luke Sexton were the first team off

WHILE some teams found their way to the finishing line in the tough Tour de Trigs Challenge, others faltered.

In teams of three on Saturday, 123 hikers attempted either to walk 50km overnight in 24 hours, or the junior 30km route in half that time.

Out of 41 teams, just 13 adult teams and three of the five junior teams finished the course through North Oxfordshire, South Warwickshire and South Northamptonshire.

This year's adult winners were the Trail Blazers from Banbury and Coventry, a mixed male and female team who walked 50km in 16.4 hours.

Hikers from as far afield as Berlin arrived for the start at The Warriner School, in Bloxham, on Saturday morning.

They were told the checkpoints they needed to reach along their chosen route and given a map.

Harry Monk 16, was on the winning junior team The Three Monkeez, with two other pupils from the Blessed George Napier School in Banbury.

He said: "We are really pleased. It was our first time so we did not expect to win."

The team got off to a bad start, missing

the second checkpoint, which meant they had to walk an extra five miles to sign in.

In the end they still finished in 12 hours 58 minutes, just five minutes ahead of the fastest mixed junior team.

Ellie Boot, 15, an Explorer Scout from Solihull, signed her team up when a rival team of Explorer Scouts suggested they couldn't rise to the challenge.

Her team got lost looking for the second checkpoint.

She said: "I don't know what went wrong. It was a bit upsetting because we were doing really well, and we were beating our rival team."

When they realised they were lost, they found a hut and reorientated themselves, but by the time they made it to the second checkpoint they were timed out.

Ellie said: "We still had fun and we will definitely do it again next year."

The Tour de Trigs has been running for 47 years.

Organiser Ron Sangster said: "Teams dropped out for different reasons: either they had not trained enough or the conditions were tougher than they thought."

"It was very cold this year."

■ To join next year visit tourdetrigs.org.uk

Train staff balloted over industrial action

WORKERS on CrossCountry Trains are to be balloted over strike action after union leaders said there had been a "comprehensive breakdown" in industrial relations.

Train managers, conductors and on-board catering staff at the operator which links Oxford and Banbury with the South Coast,

Midlands and the North of England, will vote in the next few weeks on whether to launch a campaign of industrial action.

The Rail Maritime and Transport union said there were a number of issues involved in the dispute, including rosters, training, pay, and the dismissal of a union rep.

General secretary Bob Crow said: "As a result of the total collapse of industrial relations across a whole raft of matters, RMT has now informed CrossCountry that a dispute now exists between our two organisations and that we will remain in dispute until all these issues are resolved."

CrossCountry spokesman Richard Gibson said: "We are aware the RMT union are balloting their members at CrossCountry."

"We are continuing to discuss the matters they have raised on behalf of their members and are hopeful their concerns can be resolved."

The ballot will close on Tuesday.

Building society customer spared jail over 'criminally stupid' act

Man waved toy gun at manager 'as joke'



By Emma Harrison

A 64-YEAR-OLD man who pointed a replica gun at his building society manager as a "joke" has avoided prison.

Christopher Wardell, of Main Street, Burdrop, admitted possessing an imitation firearm in a public place at Oxford Crown Court on November 28.

Wardell brandished the pistol during a meeting with account manager Leanne Dalby at Nationwide in Banbury on February 1.

The court heard not only was Wardell a regular customer at the branch, he had no previous convictions.

Jane Brady, prosecuting, said: "He said 'do you want to see something cool?'

"Do you have CCTV in the room?" She said no there wasn't.

"He took out of his bag a handgun and pointed it at Leanne."

Ms Brady said: "All she could think about was this man was going to kill her."

"She said 'I hope it is not real.' He said 'no it is not' and put it in the bag."

Wardell got the gun out again and played with it on Ms Dalby's desk as she was on the phone, before putting it away.

Ms Brady added: "She states throughout the whole incident she felt fearful for her life."

Ms Dalby called the police and Wardell was arrested.

The act was described as a "bizarre joke" by Judge Mary Jane Mowat, but there was no explanation in court of why he did it other than he thought it would be funny.

Daren Samat, defending, said: "Of course he acknowledges it was inappropriate."

"A joke perhaps went too far. He had been a regular customer of theirs."

Mr Samat added: "He accepts there would have been knock-on effects."

"He thought that he was being amusing when in fact the contrary was true."

Judge Mowat said Wardell's actions were "criminally stupid" and said: "It is a very bizarre story."

She said: "This was nevertheless a very frightening incident for Leanne Dalby."

"I hope the defendant now realises you cannot joke with an imitation firearm – especially in a bank. You saw it as a joke."

"She wasn't quite sure what to make of it and she understandably was very frightened about what you were doing."

"She dealt with it extremely sensibly and level-headed and she is to be commended for that."

"But you did, I think, see it is a bizarre joke and did not intend the effect it had."

Wardell was given a 12-month community order and told to pay £100 court costs within 28 days. He was also ordered to complete 150 hours of unpaid work.

A not guilty verdict was returned for possessing an imitation firearm with intent to cause fear of violence, which had been denied by Wardell.

Banbury Cake

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Christopher Wardell; inset, the incident in Banbury

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InBRIEF

Two are charged after metal raid

BLOXHAM: Two men arrested in the village as part of a crackdown on metal theft have been charged with attempting to acquire criminal property.

Peter Smith, 68, of Bloxham Road, Bloxham, and Tommy Smith, 36, also of Bloxham Road, were charged after answering bail at Banbury Police Station on Tuesday, November 20.

They have been granted bail and are due to appear to Banbury Magistrates' Court on December 14.

A 23-year-old man and a 31-year-old man who were answering bail on suspicion of the same offence had their bail extended.

They were arrested as part of a raid on scrapyard Smiths of Bloxham on May 29.

It was part of a wider investigation into scrap metal dealers, dubbed Operation Symphony.

Cloudy2Clear Windows – Service With A Smile!

It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

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that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done. We make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle. I often get comments back from customers on how they really didn't expect that sort of service which, in a way, is very sad for the service industry as a whole.'

Cloudy2Clear service the Oxford, Banbury & Abingdon areas and Trevor is finding that his approach is a major factor

in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.'

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Trevor a call for a free quotation on 0800 61 21 118 and he'll be happy to help!



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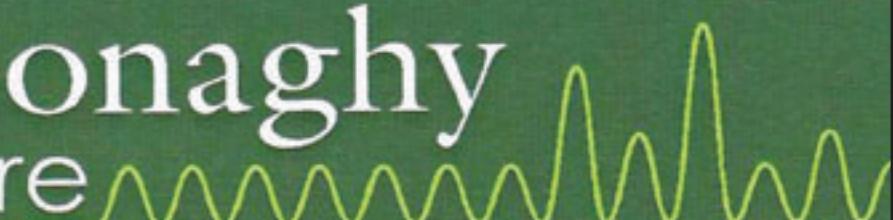
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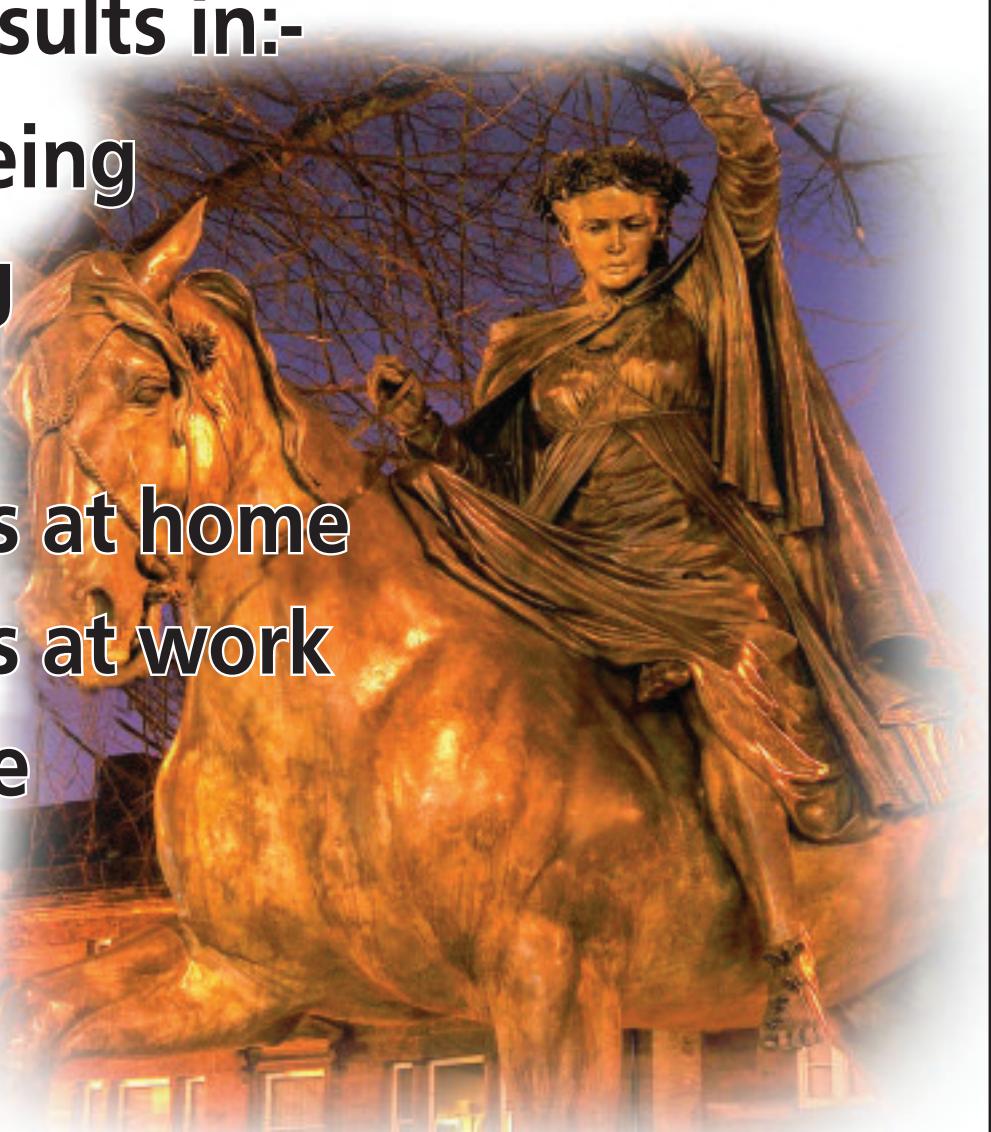
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Road recycling scheme saves council cash

'Dangerous' tar is reused

HARMFUL tar from Oxfordshire's roads is being recycled, remixed and relaid to save cash – and the environment.

The use of the carcinogenic material was banned in the 1980s, but tonnes of it still lies on the surfaces of the county's roads.

The county council isn't allowed to put tar into landfill, but it is recycling it and putting it down under new layers of other material as it resurfaces the road network.

And it has saved £217,000 so far by reusing materials instead of bringing in new resources.

The council's commercial director, Mark Kemp, said: "While all new roads are manufactured using bitumen, up until the mid-

By Freddie Whittaker

1980s many of our roads used tar in their construction. Tar is now recognised as carcinogenic and so construction methods have to change to remove any risks when these materials are found during road maintenance.

"Two techniques are available and both have been tested out in Oxfordshire as part of this year's programme."

Bitumen is a substance similar to tar but does not have carcinogenic qualities.

He added the "in-situ technique" recycled the material on site while the so-called "ex-situ technique" saw material containing tar removed

from site, taken to a depot for recycling and then relaid elsewhere.

And at a meeting of the council's growth and infrastructure committee, councillors praised the scheme.

Workmen have to wear protective clothing when dealing with the materials, but people aren't ordinarily exposed to the dangers if they simply walk on the tar.

The "in-situ technique" uses a machine which pulverises the pavement and foundation layers, and the loosened material is shaped and rolled before it is covered with a cement and pulverised fuel ash mixture before a new bitumen layer is added.

The council said the process wouldn't lead to more roads being resurfaced, but it would save money.

Pupils to feature on recording



Sibford School pupils Libby Griffiths and Will Homewood are pictured with Mo Westworth, director and founder of Unison Rock Academy, practising in the music studio

TWO talented youngsters will have their angelic voices featured on a Christmas single made in Oxfordshire.

Ten-year-old Libby Griffiths, a pupil at Sibford Junior School in Sibford Ferris, and Warriner School pupil Will Homewood, 12, have been selected to sing the lead vocals on *Dare to Make a Wish*, which will be released on Sunday.

Children from all over Oxfordshire performed in front of a panel featuring musical director Mo Westworth, of Unison Rock Academy, and former Island Records president Marc Marot.

Will and Libby joined about 400 other children from the area to record the single at St Mary's Church in Banbury.

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InBRIEF**Burglars strike in two homes**

■ BANBURY: Burglars stole cash, a laptop and aftershave after breaking into a Grange Road home through a kitchen window.

The crime happened between 8.50am and 2pm on Friday, November 23.

And on the same day, between 9.25am and 3pm, jewellery and cash were both taken from a home in Rochester Way, Twyford.

Call 101 with information.

Budget set to be scrutinised

■ N OXON: A watchdog committee will discuss Cherwell District Council's budget for 2013/14 this coming Tuesday.

The resources and performance scrutiny board will discuss ideas including introducing a commercial waste service to bring in cash.

It meets at 7.30pm at the council's offices in White Post Road. The public can attend.

Grant cash is up for grabs

■ BANBURY: Organisations are being invited to apply for grant cash from Banbury Town Council.

The council – which made £30,000 available this year – is seeking bids for projects of more than £250 by Monday.

Download the forms at banbury.gov.uk or contact 01295 250340.

Celebrating housing help

■ BANBURY: A supported housing scheme that helps young mums and dads is celebrating its 10th anniversary next month.

An event to recognise the birthday of Rachel House, on Dashwood Road, will be held in Dupuis Hall, South Bar Street, tomorrow.

Current and former residents, and Banbury MP Sir Tony Baldry will be present.

OBITUARY: 'Exceptional' man fought inequality

ALASTAIR White had a long-standing passion for helping the developing world that was shaped by his childhood in Kenya.

Mr White, who has died from prostate cancer aged 71, worked as a consultant for international development agencies.

In 2010 he stood for Parliament as The Green Party candidate, a party he joined in 2009.

Born to Hilda, an art teacher, and Hugh, a science-fiction cartoonist, his childhood in Kenya "set the arc of his life" said friend John Haywood.

He said: "Placed in an all-

white boarding school, he ran away frequently to the bush.

"It was on these escapes that he encountered the tribal people whose plight informed his view of the world as unfairly divided. He dedicated himself to improving the lives of the world's poorest and most socially deprived peoples."

Mr White studied languages at Jesus College, Cambridge, where he met first wife, Ljiljana.

His PhD was on urban poverty in El Salvador, where he met his second wife, Rita.

A long-standing consultant with the European Union, he worked in the country to find



Alastair White

ways to reconstruct society and safeguard democracy.

Mr White previously worked as a sociology lecturer at

Sterling University and the University of Sussex.

Mr Haywood said: "He was resolved that aid must be directed towards projects which are sustainable by local people and be part of a long-term process for reducing social inequality.

"This view frequently brought him into conflict with the aid agencies for which he was working."

He lived in Banbury from 1984 and in Kidlington from 2000.

During his election campaign – where he polled 959 votes – Mr White railed against inequality, saying humanity "must

reverse this race to the bottom".

Mr Haywood, a former neighbour, said: "Alastair was an exceptional man; modest; generous with his extensive knowledge; always able to describe the most complex global geopolitical issues with incisive analysis. He treated individuals with total respect, and he loved the company of his children. He also made a point of never missing *Match of the Day*."

Mr White – who died on November 15 – leaves five children and three grandchildren.

A service was held at Westmill Woodland Burial Ground on November 26.

Court hears drinker admits caravan killing but denies murder**Gran knifed in head in 'ferocious' attack**

Jennifer Hume
who was
bludgeoned to
death

A GRANDMOTHER from Banbury, who was found with a knife in her head in a blood-splattered caravan, suffered "the most brutal attack imaginable".

His face covered in blood, Stewart Dale was arrested by police outside his static home in Horspath in the early hours of Friday, May 18.

Inside the 28-year-old's home was the body of 55-year-old Jennifer Hume.

A knife was embedded in her head when police found her, a court heard on Monday.

Dale admits killing Ms Hume – who lived at Hamel Walk, Oxford, but who was originally from Banbury – but denies murder. His trial is expected to end early next week.

Ann Evans, prosecuting, told the jury at Guildford Crown Court that Dale had killed Ms Hume with weapons including a light fitting and a baseball bat after she squeezed his genitals when they were in bed together.

She said: "You may well think when you hear the evidence in this case that this was the most brutal attack imaginable."

By Ben Wilkinson

"Not content on simply killing her, he used various implements to beat her and then left her for dead."

Dale and Ms Hume had been drinking whiskey and red wine with others at Oxford city centre pubs The Chequers and The Swan and Castle on Thursday, May 17.

The pair took a taxi from Carfax to Dale's home in Prospect Park at about 10.15pm.

At about 1.45am Dale appeared at a neighbour's house with dried blood on his face and said he had killed someone, the prosecution said.

After he was arrested he told police: "She deserved it," the court was told.

Mrs Evans told the jury they would hear graphic evidence about the crime scene and Ms Hume's injuries.

She said: "It is going to be the hardest bit for you to bear during the course of this trial, because the ferocity of the attack on Jennifer Hume had left blood virtually everywhere."

She said the blood found on Dale's clothes matched Ms Hume's.

And she said in a police interview

Dale, who made money doing odd jobs for people, had admitted enjoying the attack.

She said: "He said he wasn't even angry but agreed he was possibly getting a buzz out of what he was doing."

"He said at one point he was enjoying what he was doing, enjoying trying to make as much damage as possible."

"He wanted to cut her wrist off and what had gone through his head was to cut her head off."

"Suffice to say because of the severity of the injuries she had to be identified by fingerprints rather than by the more usual method of getting loved ones to identify the body."

Dale's defence is he suffered from a loss of control after Ms Hume grabbed his private parts when he was "too drunk" to have sex with her.

But Mrs Evans told the jury of nine men and three women: "Can you imagine reacting the way he did?"

"The Crown say there is no person on earth who could consider reacting that way and admit afterwards that he quite enjoyed it, is there?"

The trial continues.

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High Court hears rail link protesters

CAMPAIGNERS fighting Government proposals to build a high-speed rail link that would cut through Oxfordshire have taken their case to the High Court.

The London-Birmingham link would cut across north-east Oxfordshire near Finmere, close to the Northamptonshire border. Five separate legal challenges to the Government's £33bn HS2 project were being heard this week in the High Court.

The series of hearings will look at allegations the Government failed to consult properly and based its approval for the line on inadequate environmental information.

Conservative-controlled Cherwell District Council is among 18 local authorities that form the 51m group to challenge the plans.

Cherwell's lead member for planning, Michael Gibbard, said: "Cherwell was one of the first authorities to oppose this colossal white elephant. It is unfortunate we have had to take this step, but we maintain that this scheme is fundamentally flawed."

Mark Barton, of pressure group VoxOpp, Village of Oxfordshire Opposed to HS2, said: "We want to have the consultation redone properly so it conforms with the law,

and we get proper proposals, a proper environmental impact assessment and proper consideration to all routes."

A Department for Transport spokesman said: "HS2 will bring cities closer together, drive regeneration, tackle overcrowding and stimulate economic growth."

"While it would not be appropriate to comment on the specific claims, the Government is confident that the decisions on HS2 have been taken lawfully and fairly and it is vigorously defending these legal challenges."

A final decision is expected in January.

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InBRIEF**School plan is supported**

BANBURY: Major development plans for Tudor Hall School in Wykham Lane should be approved tonight, a council report says.

The boarding school has applied to Cherwell District Council to extend its sports hall and put up a two-storey teaching building to replace two single-storey 1970s teaching buildings.

**Charity collection boxes stolen**

THIS is the moment a "callous and heartless" thief stole one of three dog-shaped charity boxes from two Oxfordshire rail stations.

The CCTV image shows the man taking a 3ft-high Guide Dogs collection box from Bicester North Station.

The boxes, which raise funds to provide mobility for people who are blind and partially sighted, were taken between Friday, November 9, and Tuesday, November 13, from Banbury and Bicester stations.

British Transport Police investigating officer Gary Archer

said: "Around 3.50am on Friday, November 9, CCTV captured a man entering Bicester North station before removing two collection boxes."

A box was also taken from Banbury station sometime between Friday, November 9, and Tuesday, November 13.

Mr Archer added: "This is a sad case that has seen charity boxes taken from a public space. These callous thefts are simply unacceptable and when the victim is a charity, it makes the thefts particularly heinous."

Graham Kensett, mobility team

manager for Guide Dogs, said: "This was a particularly heartless crime as the money that was stolen was given to Guide Dogs by the public to help blind and partially-sighted people."

"We rely on donations to fund our work which transforms the lives of thousands of people who are living with sight loss."

It is not known how much was in the charity boxes, but there could have been up to £300 in each.

Anyone with information should contact BTP on 0800 405040 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111.

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BEALES

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■ Shopowners call for offer to be extended **Free parking is backed by town traders**

By Oliver Evans

TRADERS say free parking has given Banbury a shot in the arm and said it backed calls for a year-round offer.

Cherwell District Council began six weeks of free parking in its car parks on Saturday, Sunday and Mondays last week.

The council said car parks were 85 to 90 per cent full over the first three days.

More than 2,000 shoppers have signed a traders' petition calling on free parking for three hours throughout the year.

But the cash-strapped authority has ruled out further concessions, saying this would be too costly.

Carol Munday, manager at Jane Shilton shoe shop in Parsons Street, said: "The footfall was up on Saturday.

"It would be good if it was carried

on, it would make a massive difference, it would stop people going out of town."

Fay Bryan, of nearby Kt-Lu's boutique, said: "I have had a few people say they have come in and spent more because they haven't had to pay to park. It has been a good weekend."

A year-round concession is vital, she said, adding: "I would say it has made a difference, more so probably on Monday."

Wayne Kennedy, who runs Church Lane gift shop Fifth Corner, said shoppers were "filtering down" to the area by parking in North Bar.

He said: "If they want revenue to come back to the High Street they are going to have to put free parking in. That is the simple fact."

Malcolm Douglas, who runs menswear shop Henry's in High Street, said: "The town was very busy on Saturday.

"It makes a huge difference. It

should be permanent and it should be the whole time. The pressure is there – I am hopeful."

But Peter Buggins, manager at Arthur Witcher menswear in Parsons Street, said it had not helped sales.

He said: "I don't know why not, I did expect it to be a success."

Deputy council leader George Reynolds has said the authority will lose £100,000 if it would have got from charges during the six weeks.

He was not available for comment, but said in October: "We are aware that there are calls for a more sustained offer of free parking. This is just not feasible at the moment."

Parking is free in Market Place, Horsefair, Calthorpe Street, South Bar, North Bar, The Mill, Chamberlain Court, Riverside and Windsor Street.

Parking is not free at Compton Road and Spiceball as these are enforced but not run by the council.

The offer will finish on January 7.

Chance to enter business awards

ENTRIES have opened for next year's Cherwell Business Awards.

Nominations have to be in by January 31 for the April 19 event, to be held at Rye Hill Golf Club in Milcombe.

The event is in its second year and has been organised with the help of Cherwell District Council and district firms.

Finalists go into the second stage of the

Oxfordshire Business Awards.

Categories are: small business; tourism; hospitality and leisure; large business; exporter of the year; new business; business person of the year; innovation; community; training and staff care award.

Lead council member for estates, Norman Bolster, said: "Our first year was extremely suc-

cessful and we would like to make sure we build on that."

"Cherwell is a hotbed of innovation and success, which is something we should all be standing up and shouting about."

"These awards not only give firms across the district a chance to shine, but also offer a valuable networking opportunity."

Claire Kingsbury, chairman of Banbury Chamber

of Commerce, which is helping to organise the event, said: "It is fantastic to be able to reward some of the many great businesses that operate in the Banbury and Cherwell area."

For information call Karen Matthews on 01295 221855, email karen.matthews@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or visit [cherwellbusinessawards.co.uk](#)



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New police boss: 'My future aims'



PCC Anthony Stansfeld pictured at the Thames Valley Police HQ in Kidlington with Chief Constable Sara Thornton

■ The new Thames Valley crime commissioner sets out his top priorities list

NEW police commissioner Anthony Stansfeld has said he cannot guarantee crime will not rise under his regime.

The Conservative said there were too many factors outside of Thames Valley Police's control, but promised he would do all he could to prevent and solve more crime. The 66-year-old was elected the force's first police and crime commissioner on November 15. He will be paid an £85,000 salary to oversee the force's budget and priorities.

PCCs were elected across the country in a Government bid to make the police more accountable.

Mr Stansfeld said that after his first year in office, he hoped people would feel safer and more criminals would be being prosecuted.

But he warned crime rates would depend not only on police performance, but factors ranging from a growing population, to which criminals were in or out of prison, and licensing laws.

He said: "A lot of it is not directly in the control of police. You can never promise anything in the future that you don't have complete control over yourself.

"I know from the police point of view we will be doing our best to reduce crime."

He added: "I hope burglaries continue to go down. I hope metal theft and rural crime goes down. I hope people are

By Ben Wilkinson

confident that vulnerable people are being looked after better.

"But one thing people have to realise is that the police are only one part of reducing crime."

Mr Stansfeld said: "It's a well-run force financially. The necessary cuts have been made and, in fact, performance has increased."

But he said detection rates – the proportion of crimes that end up with a charge or conviction – needed to increase.

He added: "They were hugely improved last year and one of my key aims is to ensure that improvement continues."

The former Army man said his top crime-fighting priorities for Oxfordshire were home burglaries, the exploitation of vulnerable people, antisocial behaviour, metal theft and rural crime.

He also said he wanted to visit every council and police area within the first four months.

And he said: "I would like to get to know every unit within the police force. I would like to be confident that everything that can be done realistically to reduce crime is being done."

He added: "I cannot tell the police how to do their jobs but what I can do is make sure they are aware of the priorities."

"I will do my best to make sure they have the resources to tackle them but I am not here to tell them how to catch burglars."

Man accused of thefts

A MAN accused of stealing a ride-on lawnmower and trailer, and driving without insurance, has been charged with four offences.

David James, 53 of Foundry Street, Banbury, has been charged after a burglary in Sibford Gower on October 24. He has also been charged with stealing a ride-on lawnmower in Bretch Hill, Banbury on October 25, theft

of a trailer in Baynards Green, Bicester on November 16 and using a motor vehicle without third party insurance.

He appeared in Banbury Magistrates' Court on October 25 for the burglary and was released on bail until January 24. He then appeared at Oxford Magistrates' Court for the further offences and was bailed until February 18.

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Lucky 11 vying to be judged top entrepreneurial talents

■ Andrew Smith
BUSINESS EDITOR
asmith@oxfordmail.co.uk

JUDGES have been sifting through the entries to the Local Business Accelerators competition and have come up with a shortlist packed with entrepreneurial talent.

The second year of the contest for small businesses and dynamic individuals has attracted entrants from across the county giving judges an extremely difficult task.

But the expert panel of business mentors has whittled it down to 11 who will now go forward to the next stage of the competition and be in line for the prizes of three months' free advertising in Newsquest publications and a year's free mentoring.

Judge Brendon Cross, managing director of Witney-based STL Communications, said: "I've been really impressed with the quality of the entrants and it's really encouraging that there are so many excellent start ups, early stage and growing businesses in Oxfordshire."

"I'm looking forward to the judging, to meeting the 11 finalists and to hopefully finding the next Healthy Performance – last year's overall winner."

One business owner who was delighted to be shortlisted is Brian Conroy, of the West Oxfordshire Academy of Performing Arts (WOAPA), based in Witney.

He said: "I am just amazed to reach the final 11. If I am one of the winners the mentoring will be particularly appealing."

"I did get some when I first started but now I would like some more to take me through to the next stage. I am operating in a niche market and there are not many people I can approach."

"Over the year I have been running the business I have been learning by my mistakes and it would be good to have someone to talk to about issues when they arise."

Mr Conroy says the academy, which teaches singing and drama to children and adults at Henry Box School in Witney, has been "going bananas" recently, with more and more people signing up.

He added: "The Saturday morning school is now full and we opened a second school on November 10 on Saturday afternoons."

"We now have three classes for four to six-year-olds and have been asked to set up a class for children with learning disabilities."

About 50 youngsters have also recorded a CD of songs the proceeds of which



NAMES ON THE SHORTLIST

Website Energisers, Banbury
Infrastuct CS, Eynsham
Illustrate My Name, Freeland
Next Generation Solar, Woodstock
Oxford Model Store, Abingdon
Ross and Ross Food, Chipping Norton

Body Politic, Kennington
House Hop, Wantage
The Little Orchard Company, Shenington
West Oxfordshire Academy of Performing Arts, Witney
WorldBeatsMusic, Shippon

■ **STAR PERFORMERS:** Members of the West Oxfordshire Academy of Performing Arts in Witney, including business owner Brian Conroy, right, who has made the final shortlist of 11

will go towards Cancer Research.

Mr Cross and fellow judges and mentors Mike Jennings, of Chalgrove-based Jennings business parks, and Bob Urwin, who runs lettings agent Martin & Co in Oxford, will now interview the shortlist with three winners ultimately selected for the prize package.

An overall winner will then be selected to go forward into the regional round of the competition and, if successful, into the national finals.

'Dragon' to mentor the top winner

ONE overall star business will be put forward to be in with a chance to gain *Dragon's Den* star Deborah Meaden as a mentor during 2013.

Ms Meaden, right, said: "With last year's LBA having demonstrated the unique power of local and regional press to provide a meaningful boost to promising young businesses, I am delighted to be supporting the initiative once again."

"The campaign provided tangible examples of the real contribution that local newspapers can provide to young businesses across many different sectors,

accelerating their development.

"Enterprise and entrepreneurship in the local community are more important than ever before and I look forward to finding another young business to mentor and drive forward."

A host of other prizes include:

- £10,000 from the Business Growth Fund
- Free business broadband and wifi access from BT along with the design and management of a website
- One year's free membership of the CBI
- Free business advice from

the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales valued at £2,000

- An iPad from Freeagent which is also offering a year's free access to its accountancy software to each of the national finalists, valued at £300 per finalist.



THE JUDGING PANEL



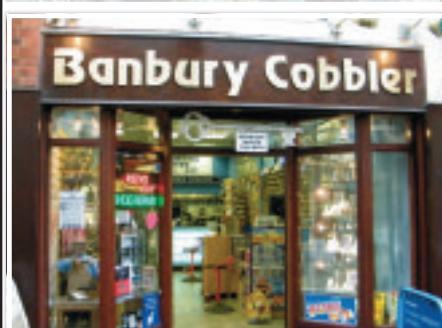
■ **ACCELERATOR JUDGES:** Left to right, Mike Jennings, Brendon Cross and Bob Urwin



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Swing into the festive spirit

It's that time of year again – the season of log fires, family feuds, booze binges and office parties you'd rather forget.

Well, if you fancy a good old-fashioned knees-up, Neil Sands and his wonderful West End cast bring *Remember When at Christmas* to The Mill Theatre today (Thursday).

The show is a romp down memory lane featuring favourites such as *Rocking Around the Christmas Tree*, *Merry Christmas Everyone*, *Silent Night*, *Oh Come All Ye Faithful*, *Let It Snow*, *Sleigh Ride*, *Frosty the Snowman*, *Winter Wonderland*, *Santa Baby* and more.

Wartime medleys and Cockney pub singalongs will twinkle alongside favourites by Doris Day, Max Bygraves, Elvis and hits from the swinging '60s and sexy '70s.

Now in its eighth year, this enchanting Christmas highlight is a new production with a fantastic mixture of singalongs, stunning costumes, glitter and fun.

O if swing is more your thing, book in for a world-class performance when King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys return to the Mill Theatre for a Christmas party.

This amazing group of swing performers plays in a cabaret club setting at the Spiceball Park venue on Sunday, December 16. The audience will take part in the

By Liz Nicholls

music from their tables, and dance if the feeling takes them.

"We're really happy to welcome King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys back for another swing cabaret," said the centre's programme manager Deborah Clarke.

"They are a huge hit every time they perform here in Banbury. Their musicianship is dazzling, their stage performances compelling and it's a fantastically professional show that will really get people in the mood for dancing."

King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys' gigs have been described as 'a joyous jamboree' of jazz as they present an irresistible mix of 1940s Kansas City jazz and blues in a truly exhilarating, upbeat and non-stop live stage performance.

Looking just as though they have just stepped out of a 1940s black and white B-movie this inimitable six-piece band delivers music from a bygone era when swing was king.

The main man, King Pleasure, above right, is unique, singing, romping, roaring and relentlessly driving the band forward and loving every moment. Few bands are blessed with a front man with such a big personality and there is an added bonus in his sensational tenor sax playing.

When the 'Boss of the Blues'



holds sway, nobody is in any doubt who is in charge. His ebullient, joyful singing has long been the band's great trademark and his playing an integral part of the band's ensemble sound. He is supported by Boysie Battum on tenor and alto sax, Mighty Matt Foundling on piano, Bullmoose K Shirley on guitar, Shark Van Schoop on double bass and Gary 'The Enforcer' Barber on drums.

The band has been on the road two decades playing every European country as well as the USA and Russia. Paul Jones on BBC Radio 2 called them "the hardest act to follow since the parting of The Red Sea." Ho ho ho!

■ *Remember When at Christmas*, Thurs Dec 6, 2pm. Tickets £10/12.

■ *Joyous Jamboree with King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys* is at The Mill on December 16, 7pm. Tickets £15. For both shows, call the box office on 01295 279002.

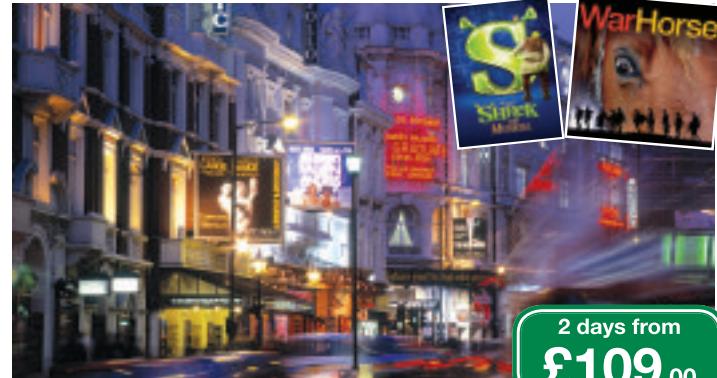


By royal approval: King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys

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Panto prize fit for a princess

Panto season is well and truly rocking and we have a Bobby Dazzler of a prize to get you into the spirit.

To celebrate star turns by Denise Welch and Bobby Davro, pictured, in Northampton's Royal & Derngate *Cinderella*, we have a family ticket to give away complete with signed programme. Bobby returns to Northampton by popular demand, following the rapturous reception for his hilarious performance in last year's panto. A man of many talents – comedian, impressionist, game-show host and actor – he soared to fame in the 1980s. He made his straight acting debut in *EastEnders* as loveable rogue Vinnie, and has also appeared on *Never Mind The Buzzcocks* and *Dancing On Ice*.

Denise will sprinkle her magic over the town as

Fairy Godmother to Bobby's Buttons. A regular panellist on ITV's *Loose Women*, Denise reached legendary status after her victory in *Celebrity Big Brother* earlier this year. The story of *Cinderella* wouldn't be complete without two Ugly Sisters, and they don't come any uglier than Darren Southworth and Andy Brady, above, who will delight audiences with their outrageous



antics. With beautiful sets, lavish costumes, and real Shetland ponies to take Cinders to the ball, this year's panto promises festive enchantment.

■ *Cinderella* runs at Royal & Derngate until January 6. Tickets, £16 to £24, Call 01604 624811.

■ To win a family ticket (four seats) for *Cinderella* at Derngate auditorium on Tuesday (December 11) at 7pm, with a signed programme, send your name, address and telephone number to liz.nicholls@oxfordshire.newsquest.co.uk by 3pm tomorrow (Friday).



Lots of laughs as seven psychos tear up screen

SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS (15, 110 minutes) Comedy/Action/Romance. Colin Farrell, Sam Rockwell, Christopher Walken, Woody Harrelson, Abbie Cornish, Harry Dean Stanton, Tom Waits, Olga Kurylenko, Gabourey Sidibe, Michael Pitt, Michael Stuhlbarg. Director: Martin McDonagh

A HOLLYWOOD screenwriter with a crippling creative block finds inspiration in the most unlikely places in Martin McDonagh's twisted black comedy that builds on the promise of *In Bruges*.

Like that impressive 2008 debut, *Seven Psychopaths* balances giggles, gore and giddiness, spattering the screen with lashings of crimson blood.

Most scenes of carnage unfold in flashback as figments of the lead character's febrile imagination: a vengeful father slits his throat with a razor, a monk sets himself alight to make a forceful political statement.

London-born writer-director McDonagh isn't afraid to sacrifice some of his most likeable and sympathetic creations, and he pokes glorious fun at the film industry when his hard-drinking hero suggests a spot of animal cruelty in his script.

"You can't let the animals die in a movie. Just the women," observes his best friend, tongue wedged firmly in cheek.

The paucity of detailed female protagonists in McDonagh's film suggests that this might not be a

joke after all. Booze-swilling Irish scribe Marty (Colin Farrell) has reached an impasse with a script called *Seven Psychopaths*, much to the chagrin of his long-suffering girlfriend Kaya (Abbie Cornish).

"I got the title – I just haven't been able to come up with all the psychopaths yet," Marty tells best friend Billy (Sam Rockwell), a jobbing actor who is involved in a dog-napping scam with elderly associate Hans (Christopher Walken).

Billy places a newspaper advert asking bona fide psychopaths to share their life stories with Marty, and mad man Zachariah (Tom Waits) answers the call.

In return for sharing his grisly past, Zachariah asks Marty to include a message to his accomplice during the film's credits, jesting that he will kill the screenwriter if the declaration is cut out.

Meanwhile, Billy and Hans kidnap a shih tzu called Bonny, unaware the pooch is the pride and joy of sadistic gangster Charlie Costello (Woody Harrelson).

When Charlie discovers that the four-legged object of his affections has been abducted from dog walker Sharice (Gabourey Sidibe), retribution is swift and brutal.

Billy appears remarkably calm about his predicament.

"This dog is my Patty Hearst," he quips, "except I'm not going to bag it, keep it in a closet, and make it rob a bank."

Seven Psychopaths falls agonisingly short of *In Bruges* but is nevertheless an entertaining



Stand-off Colin Farrell, Christopher Walken and Sam Rockwell star in *Seven Psychopaths*

ensemble piece, which aims a shotgun squarely between the eyes of political correctness.

Farrell is somewhat bland, but Walken, Rockwell and Harrelson savour their colourful supporting characters, whose fates become inextricably entwined in the desert.

McDonagh's typically delicious cocktail of macabre humour and sickening violence would go down a treat with hard-drinking Marty.

"The Spanish got bullfighting, the French got cheese and the Irish got alcoholism," remarks Billy.

Cheers!

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CakeWhat's on

Music

SATURDAY: St Mary's Church, Horse Fair, Banbury: Handel's *Messiah*. Banbury Choral Society concert, conducted by Julian Harris. With organist Charles Matthews and soloists, Keren Davis, soprano; Martin Quinn, tenor; Jeanette Ager, alto and Edward Grint, bass. 7.45pm. £12, students £8, under-12s free.

The Mill Arts Centre, Spiceball Park, Banbury: Dark Side of the Wall. Live tribute concert to Pink Floyd. 8.30pm. £12 (advance £11). 01295 279002.

Cinema

Odeon, Horsefair, Banbury: *Rise Of The Guardians* 3D, PG, Sat-Sun 11.10am, 1.30pm, Fri-Wed 6.15pm, Thu 2.15pm. *Rise Of The Guardians* 2D, PG, Fri-Wed 4pm, Thu 12.10pm. *Skyfall*, 12A, Fri-Wed 8.45pm. *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2*, 12A, Fri-Wed 8pm. *Nativity 2: Danger In*

Theatre

The Mill Arts Centre, Spiceball Park, Banbury: Dec 6, *Remember When At Christmas*. Songs, stunning costumes and lots of good old-fashioned festive fun. 2pm. £12, concs £10. Dec 7, *The Nutcracker*. Vienna Festival Ballet. 4.45pm, and 7pm. £19/£16 concs/£12 for under-16s. Dec 9, *Pinocchio*. Image Musical Theatre. 11.30am, and 3pm.

Events

FRIDAY: Victorian Market: Parsons Street, Banbury. 9am-8pm. 01789 267000.

LEIGH

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VIEWING
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VIEWING



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Puritans beaten away at Chesham United despite taking an early lead

Banbury left to rue Talabi penalty miss

BANBURY United failed to build on an early lead as they went down to a disappointing defeat at Chesham.

The Puritans, who were looking to make it three wins on the spin in the Evo-Stik Southern League Premier Division, were given the perfect start after three minutes.

Kynan Isaac crossed for Tom Lorraine to clip the ball into the far corner past Shane Gore in the Chesham goal.

However, it was all square two minutes later when Chris Watters slipped the ball home after good work from Scott McGleish.

Banbury's Wayne Blossom had a header cleared off the line, and they should have retaken the lead when Isaac was fouled by Andrew Fagan. However, Adeyinka Talabi saw his spot kick saved by Gore.

Chesham Utd
(Watters 5, Little 39, 44)

Banbury Utd
(Lorraine 3)

3

1

And Banbury were made to pay when the unmarked Tony Little tapped home at the far post to put Chesham ahead.

Six minutes before half-time, Banbury's woes continued when a repeat chance fell to Little who again tapped home at the far post to put the home side 3-1 up.

Most second half chances fell to Banbury, but they failed to score.

Banbury Utd: Coleman, Cray, Martin, Blossom, Ashton, Agyeman-Prempeh, Lorraine (Lunzitisa 86), Bridges (Dumbleton 74), Skendi, Isaac, Talabi (Plowright 90). Subs not used: Jackson, Fry.

Attendance: 298.



Banbury United's Wayne Blossom had a header cleared off the line in their 3-1 defeat

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ARIES

When was the last time you did something for yourself Aries? I think you'll find it was longer than you'd care to remember. Taking steps to get some time for yourself and to get back on track with your dreams and ambitions can do much for your career and finances this week. Give me a ring now to hear why it's worth going for promotions and changes to your work this month.

0906 585 4360

LIBRA

You can join in with the Christmas buying frenzy and spend money like it's going out of fashion or you can be the clever one who uses their spare cash to pay off those credit cards. Travel opportunities from a friend requiring a sensible partner beckon if you do. Call now for a look at the future.

0906 585 4366

TAURUS

It's going to be all too easy for you to mix business and pleasure but make sure the situations you create are ones you can live with in the New Year or you could end up falling out with someone you'll have to see for much of 2013. You do tend to make life harder for yourself at times, but by stepping back this week and looking at the bigger picture, sense is yours. Call for insight.

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SCORPIO

Children feature strongly in your stars this week and you may find yourself being asked to help or, to baby sit someone who needs support and advice. Just make sure you think about what you are saying or you could end up responsible for drastic actions they take. Your strong nature brings out the determination in even the quietest of signs. Call now so I can make you smile with a love prediction.

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GEMINI

Is it a case of better the devil you know or should you seek pastures new? Only you can know what makes you happy Gemini, but one thing is clear and that is that you need a break away from what is becoming a monotonous grind. Travel plans laid at this time show you there's more to life than you thought this time last month. Ring me now to hear why I know you're destined for great things.

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SAGITTARIUS

Events you attend at this time make you feel years younger. You finally start to have fun in your life again and the problems which made such a difficult start to December become a thing of the past. Gossip you hear about a new face is unlikely to be true. Try to make up your own mind in your own time. Give me a call now to hear why this Christmas is different from most.

0906 585 4368

CANCER

Your element of water is making you look more deeply than is necessary at a situation which is too new for you to really make any sense of, or you are too pre-occupied about. News of a birth or pregnancy could give you reason to make a journey over Christmas. Don't tell tales on work mates. It will come back on you. Give me a call to hear why your house of work is so interesting.

0906 585 4363

CAPRICORN

It seems you don't know what to do about the mess that your love life appears to have gotten into. Well, whatever your plan, the answer is to take a deep breath and do what has passed. Keep your mind on your own life and arrangements and not on others' and you will find out the facts that you seem so determined to uncover. Phone now to hear how you can get the apology you are owed.

0906 585 4369

LEO

Something which you had given up hope of happening is given a second wind by a close one who offers a helping hand which works a small miracle. The way you are approaching your day goes a long way towards the improved mood I told you you'd be in. Life starts to feel good again and you start to focus on the future and not the past. Give me a call so I can tell you about your Christmas.

0906 585 4364

AQUARIUS

Good times are waiting for you and all you have to do is close the chapter of your life you left open so unnecessarily. Family become more of a burden this week but only if you let them. There are things you can do to make all of your lives more accommodating and it would be worth your while asking them what makes them happy. Call me now to hear why Aries bring drama and intrigue.

0906 585 4370

VIRGO

Your need to know what is going on in other people's lives could see you landing yourself in hot water. Try to focus on finishing the things you started last week. It's sure to prove far more constructive and will also help you avoid confrontation. Your energy levels were gone but they're coming back. Remember to pace yourself. Call now to hear how love offers a boost from Thursday.

0906 585 4365

PISCES

Someone you have never previously got on with is showing a new side to their character which makes you realise you actually have more in common than you thought. Group events and early Christmas celebrations make for a really enjoyable week where you find out that someone who was not free is now open to offers. Give me a call now to hear why it's imperative you don't tell lies.

0906 585 4371

Town spinner is honoured to captain county

LUKE Ryan has become Oxfordshire's youngest cricket captain after taking over from Ian Hawtin.

The 24-year-old Banbury left-arm spinner, pictured, made his Oxon first-team debut at 17.

Ryan said: "I've always had aspirations to be county captain at some stage and, following Ian's retirement, hoped I would be considered for the job.

"I was pleasantly surprised, but also very honoured to be offered the captaincy.

"It was something that I accepted straight away. It's not an opportunity I was going to let pass by."

Ryan is head of cricket and a PE teacher at Cokethorpe School, who have allowed him time off to lead Oxfordshire.

Cokethorpe's headmaster Damian Ettinger said: "I am immensely proud of Luke on his appointment as captain of Oxfordshire."



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 Audrey
 XXX



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Another Year
 Another Tear
 Darling.
 Love You
 Always
 Dad
 XXXX



LAURA ANN JERRAMS

4TH DECEMBER 1993

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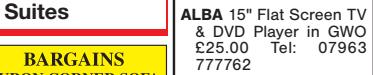
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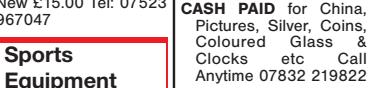
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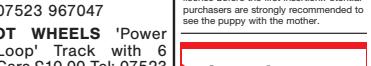
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Insignia turns up twin-turbo power

By David Duffy

THE car in the picture might look like every other Vauxhall Insignia on the road, but it is anything but a normal Mr Nice Guy.

Only a discreet badge on the rear gives a clue that under the bonnet lurks Vauxhall's most powerful diesel engine. Producing 195 horsepower, a huge amount of pulling power and remarkably low carbon dioxide emissions, the German-built Insignia BiTurbo's power plant is a truly potent package.

The twin-sequential turbocharged diesel is based on the existing 2.0-litre engine unit which powers models in the Insignia, Astra and new Zafira Tourer range.

But in BiTurbo form the engine produces up to an extra 35 horsepower, much more pulling power and a quicker sprint off the line.

But thanks to a package of eco features — including standard Start/Stop across the range — the test model's fuel consumption betters that of the single-turbo 2.0 CDTi model, by more than 2mpg. The cut in emissions also means that this large car comes free of vehicle excise duty in the first year and £95 a year after that.

Matching the increase in power, Vauxhall has fitted its FlexRide adaptive damping system as standard on all Insignia BiTurbo. The

system reacts within milliseconds to driver inputs and can 'learn' how the car is being driven and adapt damper settings accordingly. Drivers can also select Tour and Sport buttons, and separately configure the throttle, steering and damper settings in sport mode.

In common with other models in the Insignia range, the BiTurbo has the option of Vauxhall's £750 front camera system, with a clever traffic sign recognition system. It uses a small camera, positioned inside the car's windscreen, which reads and memorises both speed warning and no-overtaking signs, and flashes up the signs on the instrument panel.

The system also has a built-in lane departure warning, warning you if you unintentionally leave a lane.

The test car also came with adaptive cruise control, which allows you to maintain a set distance from the vehicle in front.

Auto facts

Model: Vauxhall Insignia 2.0 CDTi SRi BiTurbo
Price: £27,180
Insurance group: 24 (1-50)
Fuel consumption (Combined): 57.6mpg
Top speed: 143mph
Length: 483cm/190in
Width: 185.6cm/73in
Luggage capacity: 18.7 cu ft
Fuel tank capacity: 15.4 gallons/70 litres
CO₂ emissions: 129g/km
Warranty: 100,000 miles



POWERFUL PACKAGE: The Insignia BiTurbo is fitted with special electronic suspension

Safety features range from an electronic stability programme, and an optional collision alert system, to help to prevent crashes, and a range of front, side-impact and curtain airbags if the worst should happen.

The test car also rode on an £870 optional set of 20-inch, five twin-spoke alloy wheels and was fitted with a £1,200 satnav system using a seven-inch colour monitor, linked to a traffic alert system and seven-speaker hi-fi system. The BiTurbo is available with a choice of five-door hatch and Sports Tourer models in SRi, SRi Vx-line and Elite trims, with prices from just over £27,000.

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■ HYUNDAI is planning an entry-level Veloster Turbo targeted at a list price of less than £20,000. A version called the Turbo SE (Special Equipment) recently went on sale for £21,995, fitted as standard with a huge kit list that includes leather seats, climate control, satnav and 18-in two-tone alloy wheels. However, a Hyundai UK insider has revealed that a new version of the '1+2-door' car is on the way, with some of the Turbo SE's kit removed, such as satellite navigation and leather seats, and a list price at least £2,000 lower.

■ KIA'S high-value sports utility vehicle, the Sorento, has undergone substantial revisions and is available to order in UK dealerships. In a simplified range, all models now have permanent all-wheel drive system and are powered by a revised version of Kia's 2.2-litre CRDi turbodiesel engine. It has an all-new platform and major changes have been made to the suspension, steering and brakes. Prices start at £26,495 for the KX-1 2.2 CRDi, rising to £35,095 for the KX-3 2.2 CRDi.

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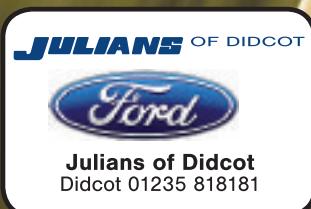


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